LCIA
1922 - 2022

Les Cheneaux Islands Association
Winter Newsletter
February, 14, 2022
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President's Letter
Mike Patrick

Winter Greetings from LCI

Hope everyone is having a good winter season!

The 61st Annual Les Cheneaux Islands Snowsfest weekend is in the books and it was a great success! The weather was pretty darn cold, but it was a beautiful weekend with lots of sunshine. Congratulations and a big thank-you to the Les Cheneaux Chamber of Commerce, led by Chamber President, Katie Duman, and to all the community volunteers for their time and efforts in making this event so well organized and fun for all ages. Winter fireworks on the ice are the best!! The LCI Chamber's Facebook page has lots of photos of all the great snow sculptures and videos of the weekend's events.

The various LCIA committees are joining forces and making plans to commemorate the ***100th Anniversary*** of the Les Cheneaux Islands Association. They have some exciting announcements and new events planned for 2022 that will be shared in the Spring Newsletter which will be published in May - *so stay tuned!!*

I've been volunteering as a groomer for the Les Cheneaux Snowmobile Club and can report the trails are in good condition - base is thin, but trails are well groomed. Stay Right & Ride Safe!

Five more weeks until Spring - See you then!

LCIA Board of Directors Meeting Dates for 2022

Meetings will be held at the Hessel School House and will also be available via Zoom

(All LCIA members are welcome to attend)

Friday - May 27 - 9:00 a.m.
Friday - July 8 - 9:00 a.m.
Friday - September 2 - 9:00 a.m.

The Annual Business Meeting will be held at the Hessel School House
Wednesday - August 3 - 3:00 p.m.

Followed By . . . . . .

A Special Event in Celebration of
LCIA's 100th Anniversary !!
5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

(More Details to come in the Spring Newsletter)

Manager's Report
Mark Engle

Weather - Water - Update:

We have experienced plenty of cold weather conditions so far in the winter of 2022. The annual Snowsfest weekend (Feb. 10-14) was met with minus 10 to minus 15 degrees for low temps and high temps struggled to get above zero!! Most areas in the Les Cheneauxs are covered with 18-24 inches of ice.

The long term average for Great Lakes ice coverage is 53.3%. The record for ice cover was 94.7% set in 1979 compared to a record low of 11.99% set in 2002. The current overall Great Lakes ice cover is nearly 40% with Lake Huron at approximately 50% and increasing daily. A drive to Detour on the east M-134 North Huron Scenic Byway revealed piles of beautiful blue ice along the shoreline. The rare scene has attracted many spectators.

February water levels are lower than a year ago on all the Great Lakes except Lake Ontario. Water levels are still above long term averages except for Lake Superior which is slightly less than normal. Lakes Huron and Michigan are expected to be at a steady level. The Army Corp of Engineers' six month projection shows Lake Huron to be slightly lower (than 2021) by July 2022.

LCIA Property Inspections

Good ice and recent snowfall has made for excellent travel conditions for LCIA Property Inspectors. Security has been good so far this winter with no break-ins or vandalism reported.

The biggest issues to date are doors/windows blown open by wind and the on-going problem of downed trees and branches. Cloverland Electric typically checks all electric service on islands in late February or March in an effort to clear obstructions from power line right-of-ways.

Fishing Report:

Lots of fishing shanties dot the ice in Hessel Bay, Musky Bay and Government Bay. Good catches of perch, pike, splake and occasionally lake trout have been reported at all locations. Unlike the past few years, this winter's ice is solid, so ice fishing may be possible for quite a while!

Environmental Committee Report – Winter 2022
Bob Smith, Chair

Water Quality:

Les Cheneaux water quality remains highly desirable for recreational activities. The range in nutrients that feed algae and submersed aquatic weed populations in our channels was within expected levels during the 2021 season. Areas with normally low phosphorus and algae concentrations reflected the expected pattern, as did areas with historically higher phosphorus and algal levels. Even the higher phosphorus and algal concentrations that are found in some areas of Les Cheneaux fail to reach levels of minimal concern based on limnology criteria and compared to the rest of Lake Huron and the other Great Lakes.

Jackson Barr helped Watershed water survey crew last summer.

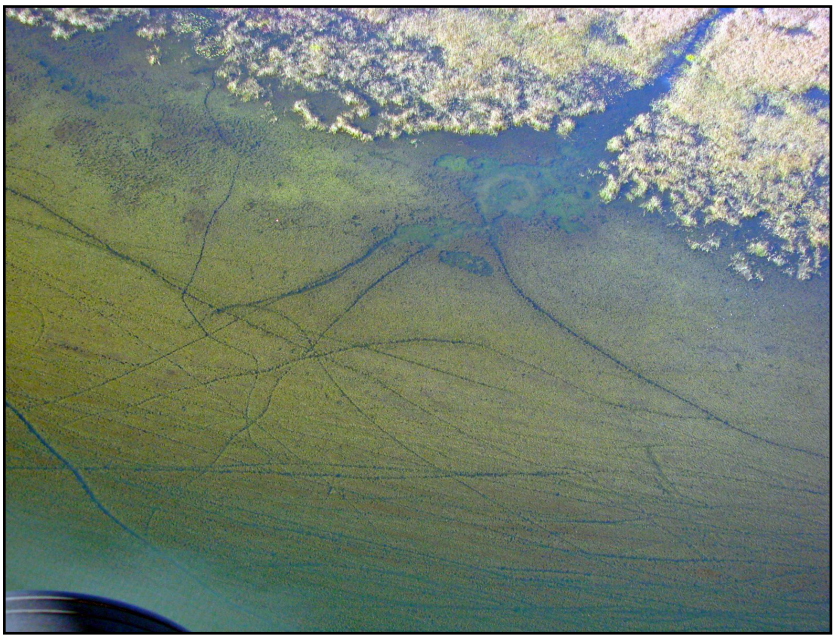
The Clark Township public water point at Cedarville Harbor became operational late last summer and has been enjoyed by many. It is presently decommissioned but will again be functional soon after ice-out.

The next photos show three aggressive, non-native plants that shoreline property owners should look for and manage. Please contact the Watershed Council for control method guidance such as pulling, raking, cutting or use of benthic tarps.

A non-native cattail (*Typha*) stand. Non-native cattail growth has rapidly spread, especially in the eastern half of Les Cheneaux, during the past several years. The area without cattail growth in the center of this photo is the result of a team from Loyola Univ (Chicago) physically cutting the plants five years ago. When cut below the water surface cattails tend to drown and not regrow.

A non-native phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) stand with mature flowers at the top is shown here. The inset shows Dick Knapp beside young phragmites plants before the flowers began to form.

The rapid advance of both phragmites and cattail slowed as the level of Lake Huron increased in recent years. However, as the Lake level decreases we can expect both plant species to expand their dense growth along our shores.



Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) growth in Cedarville Bay is shown in this image from 2012. The "trails" are actually paths cut by boat propellers as boats made their way through the EWM mat.

EWM has not been a major problem since the level of Lake Huron has increased. However, as the Lake level drops we can expect EWM to again become a navigational, environmental and safety problem. Aside from physical removal, there are no safe methods to minimize EWM growth that are acceptable to the Les Cheneaux community. An exception is the highly effective and safe, native biofungicide developed by the Watershed Council for EWM management in 2017. **This biological control agent is available for commercialization.**

Where did all our water go in 2021? And so quickly?

After eight years of annual water level increase totaling almost six feet, the level of Lakes Michigan and Huron (MH) dropped twenty-four inches between March and June in 2021. Where did all the water from the historic high lake level go?

Readers are well aware of factors that contribute to high and low water levels of the Great Lakes: precipitation, evaporation, weather patterns and diversions.

If Lake MH experienced such a dramatic decline in water level and there were no known additional water diversions, then L Superior (SUP) would be expected to have a similar decrease. Not so.

This accompanying chart shows that both SUP and MH had twelve inches less water than in March of 2020, according to the Corps of Engineers (USACE) figures. However, the pattern for SUP became less than one foot below 2020 levels during which time MH continued to decrease in level. By June, the SUP level was 9 inches less than the 2020 level but MH was 24 inches lower.

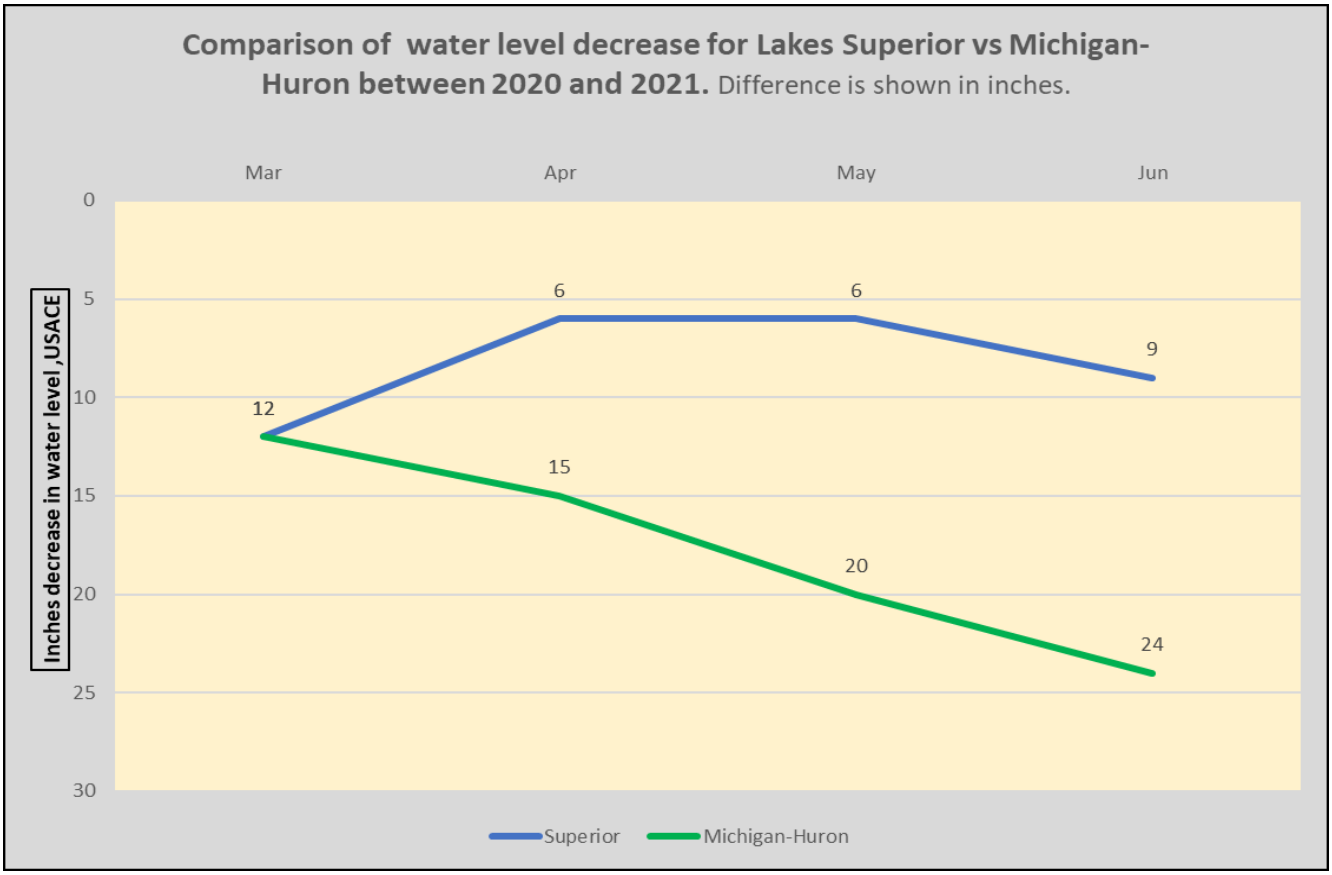
Why is this?

If SUP had unimpeded flow into MH then one would expect levels of both water bodies to shift at similar rates. Was there more outflow from MH? More drought impact on MH? More water withheld in SUP?

Experience tells us that is was likely the latter. By treaty, the level of SUP is maintained within a predetermined range. There is no such treaty or control on MH. Therefore, when SUP experiences excess water from its watershed then more water is discharged through the St Marys river into MH. This is one reason for the higher levels experienced in MH during the past several years. Similarly, when SUP experiences less water from its watershed then water is withheld. The downstream consequence is that MH experiences even less water than it would receive if SUP were to discharge a nominal volume. Either way, Lake MH levels are adversely affected and the extreme shifts in MH levels exacerbate environmental, community and commercial interests.

How do shoreline communities like Les Cheneaux deal with these issues?

Our community members and organizations have been writing letters and submitting position papers to elected leaders at both the State and Federal level for decades. Recipients typically respond with concerned and polite comments indicating that they agree with our position and feel our pain but there has been no discernable action.



The International Joint Commission (IJC) is a bi-national organization comprised of appointed representatives from the USA and from Canada whose charge is to address water-centric issues along the border between our two countries. Many IJC meetings have been attended and input provided in addition to letter writing during the past several years. The IJC,too, feels our pain but, again, there has been no plan articulated about how, or if, to deal with extreme levels of Lakes SUP, MH or the lower Lakes of Erie and Ontario. As an aside, the level of L Ontario is also controlled within a specific range by statute.

To learn more about SUP water levels and influence by the Corps and IJC, log on to : *Lake Superior International Board of Control*.

Citizen organizations such as Restore Our Waters International (ROWI, “restoreourwater.org.”) is comprised of advocate representatives from the USA and Canada. ROWI has actively engaged both Ottawa and Washington DC about addressing the extreme high and extreme low water issue of the Great Lakes, especially for the “middle lakes” of MH. ROWI’s position is backed by volumes of data, engineering models, factual examples and well-spoken representatives with credentials in their respective fields. ROWI has engaged multiple sister groups and has support from them. To date their proposals have yet to gain traction with any governmental group with an ability to address and deal with extreme lake levels. Stay tuned.